



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

For Release: **IMMEDIATE**
Date: November 30, 2006

Contact: Renee Hoffman
Phone: 919/733-5612

**GOV. EASLEY ANNOUNCES \$134,143 APPROVED FOR COLUMBUS COUNTY
TORNADO VICTIMS**

Reminds Residents to Continue to Apply for Help

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today said residents of Columbus County who were affected by the November 16 tornado have already been approved for \$134,143 in state disaster aid. Included in that total is more than \$40,000 to help pay for funerals of those killed by the tornado.

“Our outreach teams have been working in the Riegelwood community for two weeks to make sure that everyone who is eligible for disaster aid has asked for help,” Easley said. “Many of these people have lost everything and we are going to do all we can to help them get their lives back to normal.”

Easley approved a state disaster declaration on November 17, making grants available to help with items such as home repairs and funeral expenses, and received approval for a disaster declaration from the Small Business Administration for low interest loans to make repairs. Staff members from the N.C. Division of Emergency Management went door-to-door in the community searching for people with damages and so far, 61 have applied for state and federal assistance.

Under the state disaster declaration, homeowners can get grants of up to \$28,200 to pay for real and personal property damages; renters are eligible for compensation for personal property damages as well. Grants pay for funeral expenses up to \$7,600. Funds are also available to pay for medical expenses not covered by insurance. Residents must apply to the SBA before they apply to the state disaster program.

Under the Small Business Administration program, homeowners and renters can get low interest loans to repair or replace disaster damaged real estate or personal property owned by the victim, including automobiles. Business owners can get loans to repair or replace disaster-damaged property owned by the business, including real estate, inventories, supplies, machinery and equipment. Nonprofit organizations such as charities, churches, private universities, etc., are also eligible.

Today, state Emergency Management staff and local ministers have arranged to have various federal, state and local disaster aid and volunteer groups at the disaster application center to give residents another chance to come to a ‘one stop shop’ for help. Agencies including the state, SBA, legal aid, building inspector and others will be at St. John Missionary Baptist Church in Riegelwood beginning at 7:00 p.m.